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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000088

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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ECON](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SECURITY IN BASRAH PROVINCE

REF: A. BASRAH 086
[1](#)B. BASRAH 072

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CLASSIFIED BY: Howell Howard, A/Director, Regional Embassy
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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: While attacks against Coalition Forces (CF) remain at a six-month low, security for Basrah's politicians and government security forces is bad. A series of assassinations, or attempts, of politicians and security officials has highlighted the failure of basic law enforcement. University professors, journalists and those who work with the Coalition continue to be targeted and contract killings for non-political disputes abound. Police Chief Jalil is trying to bring law and order but so far has not achieved success. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) A series of high level (for Basra) assassinations or attempts highlights a lack of security for both police and political actors. All were attacked by sniper fire.

- BG Nuri: Director of Al-Baldah police station (edge of Basrah City), wounded September 22.
- Sheikh Amjed Al-Janabi: Sunni cleric, killed September 21 in Zubayir.
- Sheikh Adnan: Sunni cleric, wounded September 21 in Zubayir.
- Sayid Salem: killed September 17 in Abu Al Khaseeb, edge of Basrah. Member of 15th of Shaban or Sayid Al Shuhada Movement. Contacts suspect the Islamic Party.
- Police Captain Abd Al-Muhsin: nephew of Police Chief MG Jalil; killed September 18. Contacts suspect Jaysh Al Mahdi (JAM).
- Sayid Hussein Al Husayni: killed first day of Ramadan, September 13, unknown assailants. Member of Al Shaheed Al Mhrab.
- Imad Al-Batat: Basrah representative of Ayatollah Muhammad Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani survived assassination attempt in which a guard was killed, about a week ago, in Al-Hayonea (Basra city center).
- Brigadier Eydan: Deputy Provincial Director of Police; suffered superficial head wounds September 20 in Basrah City. Contacts report the sniper was sent by an "Iranian group" in Basrah, upset over Jalil and Eydam's firing a number of National Information and Investigation Agency (NIIA) officers weeks ago. (After the firing, unknown assailants fired shots through MG Jalil's door.)
- LTC Majeed Shenan Fary al-Yassiri: acting Commander Police

Criminal Investigation Division; wounded September 21, in hospital intensive care.

- Police Chief Major General Jalil Khalaf Shuei told us unknown persons tried to assassinate by IED him several days ago. He did not formally report it as he considered it a "routine" incident. (Note: Jalil has endured four other shooting attacks in the last few weeks. End Note.)

¶3. (S) While Basrah's police have been ordered to investigate some of these attacks, no one has been arrested. Contacts seem to be sure of the militia affiliation for many. MG Jalil has consistently reported that Basra's police are thoroughly infiltrated with JAM and other militia elements. There are some positive Iraqi Security Forces developments, however. Jalil appears eager to confront militias (Reftel) with his new battalions of police from outside Basrah, while Basrah security chief General Mohan has tried to reconcile parties/militias with a communally-signed (except by JAM) "Honour Document" which commits militias to surrender heavy weapons. The arrival of Iraqi Army armored units could be used to support Iraqi Special Forces operations against snipers.

¶4. (C) Other killings and kidnappings continue, especially among academics. In the past month, the bodies of two university professors have been found, kidnapped several weeks earlier. Contacts tell us that non-political murders remain common in the Basrah/Zubaiyr metropolitan area. These killings reflect score-settling for disputes such as marriage conflicts, business deals gone awry, neighborhood property disputes, etc. Disaffected persons hire militia members to moonlight as contract hit men. Many contacts tell us that official death tolls as released by the Provincial Joint Coordination Center (PJCC) are underreported and Jalil admitted to us an accuracy rate of fifty percent. (Note: there is no longer an MND-SE liaison working at the PJCC, although there is a PJCC liaison at MND-SE. End Note.) A Basrah University professor told us that his friend's daughter was kidnapped two days ago for an unknown motive. Another professor said that his friend working in a hospital morgue reports several bodies from violent deaths per

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day in that one hospital which he thinks do not get reported.

¶5. (U) For the average working class or small business owner Basrawi, things are pretty much the same and economic life continues - so long as a person does not become embroiled in a dispute important enough to warrant violence. For the people living near the Basrah Palace Complex (BPC), there is relatively more security as the formerly frequent stray IDF rounds often fell on civilian homes. For the average citizen, there is still no effort to contact the police to deal with crimes, since police are associated with militias. Crimes associated with militia religious radicalism are prevalent: 30 barbers killed in the past two weeks, suspected alcohol users or sellers killed, and the bodies of four women were found in Basrah City recently, all too common events.

¶6. (S) The climate of insecurity extends to locally employed laborers at the MND-SE's Basrah Air Station (BAS) base and its REO tenants. The contractor hired to regrade the road into the REO was kidnapped a month ago, then ransomed. As a result, he will no longer do contracting on the base. Several days ago presumed JAM members kidnapped a youth near the Basrah Palace Complex who knew the names of Iraqi workers at the REO. JAM distributed leaflets addressed to REO workers telling them to stop cooperating with the Americans or else. Many of the workers have stayed home over the past couple of days to lay low and give the impression that they are not working here. There have also been reports that laborers working for the British forces have been targeted.

¶7. (S) While rocket attacks against the MND-SE base have been sparse since August 17, the Shaibah logistics base (previously vacated by MND-SE) has been the subject of a number of mortar attacks over the past week. MND-SE has previously concluded that the IDF attacks were related to the presence of a US MiTT Team,

now departed. Alternative theories are that either some JAM who agreed not to attack MND-SE are looking for loopholes, rogue JAM elements continue their attacks, or other militias are attacking.

18. (S) JAM on JAM violence also appears to be escalating. Sadrism Cleric Sheikh Mohammed Daod Al-Basyri (Ref B) telephoned us that one of his associates was tortured and then released after refusing to admit that Sheikh Mohammed had been talking to Americans. That associate reported coming from a room with around 30 JAM-related persons who were being tortured by electric drills and gunshots to make them tell of contact with Americans. We reported this to Generals Mohan and Jalil as actionable information, but to our knowledge the police did not attempt any arrests.

19. (S) COMMENT: We assess that security for political actors and police is deteriorating; security for the average citizen continues at unacceptable levels. The JAM ceasefire and any other arrangements that might exist are not stopping political hits. The new police battalions should be a positive improvement for Jalil's attempt to control the city, but there still has yet to be a test of the police confronting violent groups or individuals. The security climate also prevents the PRT and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from visiting reconstruction projects. It remains to be seen if Mohan's mediation and Jalil's plan for applying force will be able to stop sniper attacks. Intimidation of MND-SE and REO workers, along with other incidents suggest that elements hostile to the Coalition are still a threat. Other complications offer both threat and opportunity: while most interlocutors mention Iranian influence as exacerbating violence, tribal sheiks are now coming to us interested in having a positive impact on provincial security. As we move towards Iraqi control of Basrah Province, it will be important to improve ISF tools to combat violence. End Comment.
HOWARD